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## Rosabeth Moss Kanter: Revolutionary roots and liberal spores

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Rosabeth Moss Kanter is a figure who looms large in organisation studies. Since her first major projects in the 1970s, Kanter's ideas on leadership, change, and power generated important shifts in thinking within the field at the time of their writing, and – perhaps most importantly – propagated many developments of management and organisation research today. Her work is as expansive as it is rich in its theoretical and empirical contributions, ranging from communes to infrastructure; leadership to strategy. In this chapter we consider her contributions in two areas: by engaging with *Men and Women of the Corporation*<sup>1</sup> (first published in 1977) and *Change Masters: Innovations for Productivity in the American Corporation* (first published in 1983), we show how Kanter's early discussions on power, politics and exclusion represented important steps toward current discussions around inequalities at work, and to understanding employees' empowerment for sustaining innovative organisations. Approaching Kanter's work through “zoom in, zoom out” (Kanter, 2011), we synthesise and situate her ideas in relation to recent debates, arguing that they represented revolutionary shifts in thinking at the time of writing. Equally, we suggest that the works we examine feed into what might now be considered the liberal mainstream, and that scholars have, once more, seen the need for a critical shift in approaches to innovation and inequality.

### Career and major works

Rosabeth Moss Kanter holds the Ernest L. Arbuckle Professorship at Harvard Business School and is a Founding Chair and Director of the Harvard University Advanced Leadership Initiative. Her 1967 PhD., from the University of Michigan, led to her first two books, on communes, in 1972 and 1973, written while an associate professor at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. With an interim year teaching sociology at Harvard, Kanter stayed at Brandeis until 1977,<sup>2</sup> when, with partner Barry A. Stein, she founded the consultancy Goodmeasure Inc. She also moved to Yale and published her book, *Men and Women of the Corporation*. This inspired a video *A Tale of 'O': On Being Different*,<sup>3</sup> which illustrates the core concepts of the book, and which has been used as a tool of diversity training. The ideas in this work have remained influential in the USA and beyond, informing organisational policies and practices around gender inequality in the workplace.

Kanter made a move to Harvard Business School in 1986 and has been a prolific writer on the topics of leadership, change, and gender in the workplace. She is a regular contributor to the Harvard Business Review, which she edited from 1989 to 1992. Alongside her engagement with public and practitioner audiences throughout her career, in 1988 she advised presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis with whom she co-authored *Creating the Future: The Massachusetts Comeback and its Promise for America*, an account of the

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<sup>1</sup> Appearing in rankings of popular and influential books in organisation studies, see Bell et al. 2016

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rosabeth-Moss-Kanter>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amazon.co.uk/tale-being-different-organization-Colophon/dp/0060907290#customerReviews>

economic regeneration of the sitting governor's state and the role played by his leadership practices. Infrastructure is a continuing interest for Kanter and is the focus of her book *Move* (2015). Kanter became an established voice in the fields of change and innovation through works such as *The Change Masters: Innovations for Productivity in the American Corporation* (1983) and *When Giants Learn to Dance* (1989), seeking to understand how organisations can foster innovation and their capacity for change. Organisational change has been of interest since her earliest research on nineteenth-century and modern communes, in which she investigated their cohesiveness and longevity.

Kanter has received several honours for her work: from the Guggenheim Fellowship (1975) and the Wright Mills Award for *Men and Women of the Corporation*; to her induction into the Thinkers50 Hall of Fame<sup>4</sup>. Created by the Center for Families at Purdue University and the Center for Work & Family at Boston College, the *Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award* is now given in recognition of excellence in work-family research.

### **On inequality: the structural dynamics of power**

In *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Kanter describes the dynamics of power in a multinational organisation that she names 'Indsco' – chosen not only for its size and influence in the USA but because of its claims to being 'socially conscious'. Kanter seeks to show the insidiousness of the relations that can shape opportunity and marginalisation. The work is rich with empirical examples that lend the work vibrancy and familiarity. The book has three objectives, the first is to chart the rise of the 'administrative classes' in organisations, encompassing managerial and clerical roles; second, to explore how certain roles shape possibilities for individual action, with reference to the manager, the secretary, and the manager's wife; and third to understand how structures shape opportunity, power(lessness), and inequality.

Although Kanter describes it as a sub-theme, Kanter's work on gender was not only radical in its conceptualising of managers' wives as an oft-sidelined and important part of the organisation, but also in its relational view of gender; understood to be a set of 'images embedded in the roles [that] are inherent neither to the nature of the tasks themselves nor in the characteristics of the men and women; instead they are developed in response to the problems incumbents face in trying to live their organizational lives so as to maximise legitimacy or recognition of freedom' (1993: 5). This challenged existing discussions of whether gender differences were the root cause of people's differentiated behaviours within organisations (see for example in Sokolowska, 1965), and the source of inequality, positioning gender as an effect of organising itself. This pivotal line of reasoning, that *roles create people*, has perhaps become one of Kanter's most well-known contributions as a result of the third objective and final part of the book, which examines how the structure of hierarchies and the proportions of groups shapes opportunities within organisations. Such structures, Kanter argues, are central to power: they can create virtuous cycles of opportunity and upward mobility, or present 'a set of choices that are equally restricting, from which there is no escape' (*ibid*: 11). Power therefore is understood as the capability 'to get things done' (1993: 166), as finite, and as (unequally) shared among organisational

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<sup>4</sup> <http://thinkers50.com/hall-of-fame/>

members. This view of power feeds into Kanter's conceptualisation of 'empowerment' as 'control over the conditions that make their actions possible' (1993: 166). Kanter is credited with being one of the first to popularise the notion, and it is discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

We now delve into the book's discussions of gender inequality in the workplace. Because Kanter's work brims with detail from her empirical setting, this close view illustrates how Kanter's perspective on the relation between structure and power becomes manifest in specific theoretical concepts.

### *Token women*

Inspired by Simmel's studies of proportions and interpersonal dynamics, Kanter draws on her empirical data to suggest that 'It was rarity and scarcity, rather than femaleness *per se*, that shaped the environment for women' (1993: 207). Kanter concentrates on the *skewed* group, where the ratio of one 'type' of person to another is around 85 : 15. Those in the majority are 'dominants', and those in the minority – 'tokens'. Elaborated in further work (1977), the effects of disproportionate representation are theorised as stemming from the heightened *visibility* of tokens; that their small number means greater awareness and attention. This visibility leads to the intensification of performance pressures on token individuals. Kanter gives ethnographic accounts that describe how women at Indsco became symbolic – in their successes and failures they were representative of all women to the dominant group, and examples to women lower down in the hierarchy. Whilst symbolic status meant that women gained some opportunities, the increased level of scrutiny meant that decisions which may seem of little importance, such as 'what to wear and who to sit with at lunch' (1993: 215) took on significance for the individual and their type: "'they are watching me [...] they are expecting me to prove something one way or the other'" (1993: 216). This awareness by token women that they are the object of the (male) gaze (Mulvey 1989) means that they are compelled to turn it upon themselves in self-regulation. Lewis and Simpson (2012) read visibility as a panoptic form of power that disciplines women as subjects; shaping who they can legitimately be. In response to performance pressures, Kanter argues that tokens might seek to outperform others and/or trade on their difference as a point of value; alternatively, they might seek to limit their visibility by adopting traits of the dominants, or avoiding conflict. Where reflecting the dominant group may be advantageous in some respects, women and their acceptability are still read by others in relation to their bodies: the 'double bind' has since become an important idea in research on gender inequality, 'where women who are considered feminine will be judged incompetent and women who are competent unfeminine' (Powell et al. 2008: 415). Ahmed talks about the dangers of visibility and conflict for people from marginalised groups 'When we give problems their names we can become a problem for those who do not want to register that there is a problem [...] You can become a problem by naming a problem.' (2015: 9).

At the same time, *assimilation* occurs, whereby tokens are subject to stereotyping: whilst highly visible, tokens are not seen for their individuality. Tokens are also subject to *role encapsulation/entrapment* whereby there are a limited number of roles that they are permitted to occupy: Kanter talks specifically about women's roles as 'mother', 'seductress', 'iron maiden' and 'pet' (1993: 233-236). One might say that these roles represent a restricted

set of lenses through which women become legible in organisations. Kanter asserts that gender, the source of the women's tokenism, acts as a *master status* that modifies their work identities: either in cases of 'mistaken identity' where Indsco women's roles were taken for 'secretaries [...] wives or mistresses' (*ibid*: 231), or as a qualifier that becomes attached to their identities by hyphenation: such as 'woman-engineer' (1977: 968). This again restricts the possible recognition of individuality but also the sense that they belong in the workplace. The alienation of this dynamic is stark if we consider Shore et al.'s (2011) proposal that the experience of both belongingness and uniqueness is a prerequisite for the achievement of inclusion within organisations.

Lastly, *polarisation* is described by Kanter as the phenomenon by which differences are exaggerated for both token and dominant groups. The presence of difference means heightened awareness of both the commonalities within the group and difference from the perceived interloper(s). *Boundary heightening* occurs between the two groups in response to a felt threat through attention to culture – where the underlying assumptions and rationalities of the way things are done are brought into question, or at least habitual modes of being are brought into relief: 'ironically, tokens unlike people of their type represented in greater proportion, are thus instruments for *underlining* rather than *undermining* majority culture' (emphasis in original, 1993: 223). Kanter describes how performances of camaraderie and prowess by men were observed in groups where women were present but not in sufficient numbers to introduce a 'hybrid of conversational themes' (*ibid*). Token women were subject to tests of loyalty toward the dominant group, or positioned as one who is an interruption to processes that would otherwise be easier, quicker – smoother.

### *Leadership and gender*

Kanter talks about the women of Indsco's overall preference for men as leaders and attributes this to a *preference for power* (1993: 197). Finding no substantive differences between women and men's leadership strategies of styles, Kanter theorises that the preference is informed by the access that men tended to have to opportunities and the logic of betting on a winner (*ibid*: 200). A preference reinforced by the 'mean and bossy woman' stereotype (1993: 201) suffered by women. Kanter argues that women may be more inclined to lead in ways that involve close supervision of their subordinates because they themselves are subject to scrutiny and transmit downwards the effects of their relative powerlessness. Ferguson found a tendency for those of 'difference' to be awarded only those roles that are highly rule-governed and this 'bureaucratic domination' may further heightens the surveillance of those from marginalised groups (1984 : 107). Although Kanter asserts that 'power begets power' (1993: 168) she speaks to the upward accumulation of opportunity that can be enjoyed by an individual. Lewis and Simpson perspicaciously re-read Kanter's work to see power as a vortex through which the 'dominant centre of male management is preserved' and that male privilege maintains its hegemony (2012: 148-149). Women at Indsco were less likely to have powerful alliances and performed additional labour in resisting benevolent sexism from those seeking to protect them by 'encapsulating them in safe positions' (1993: 203). Kanter's ideas on leadership have been cited in discussions about homosocial reproduction and the effects of powerlessness in organising (e.g. Pfeffer 1992); and in relation to women's networks where women's connections appear more

effective when they are task-related rather than social, since the latter risks reinforcing stereotypes (Ibarra 1992: 441).

Kanter situates gender primarily as something that is contained in bodies and subject to distortion through overgeneralization by others. What is missing from her analysis, and has been developed since, is a perspective on leadership as gendered. This connects with some critics who point out that power relations are enacted not only through relative numbers, but in the value that is placed on masculine attributes and male bodies. With regards the former, scholars have found women leaders to be judged less favourably in terms of their congruity with leadership roles, and when 'the prescriptions of a leader role [are] enacted by a woman' (Eagly and Karau 2002: 573). Yoder and Sinnett (1985) and Heikes (1991) find that men do not experience the same effects when tokens in a group but that socio-cultural factors interact with proportions, pointing to the need to examine both structural and institutional dominance (Izraeli 1983). With regards to the latter, the ideal worker is traditionally disembodied and organisational appears neutrally-structured based on this assumption (Acker 1990). This neutrality is disturbed by the presence of women's bodies that are less easily contained: they 'intrude' into the workplace through menstruation, menopause, breastfeeding (Brewis and Sinclair 2000, Sayers and Jones 2015). Compared with the supposed invisibility of men's bodies (Liu 2017) women are problematic. Knights (2015) argues that the embodied dimension of organising needs recognition, and, to achieve this, the binary of masculine-feminine or male-female needs to be dismantled. This would afford us the capacity to relate to one another with a corporeal ethics (Pullen and Rhodes 2014) that resists the oppression and denial of difference. In these ways, *Men and Women of the Corporation* lacks a political perspective on power that fully recognises how the exclusion of women involves struggle over meaning and value.

### **On the human side of innovation: people as agents of change**

*"Thus, individuals actually need to count for more, because it is people within the organisation who come up with new ideas, who develop creative responses, and who push for change."* (Kanter, 1983:18)

*The Change Masters: Innovations for Productivity in the American Corporation* explores how corporate entrepreneurs – so called 'change masters' – envision productive change within the organisation. In this book, Kanter examines 115 innovations in 10 high-tech companies, focusing on change and its enabling conditions. The study came at a turbulent time for the US economy: high bankruptcy rates, fierce competition from Japan, and a high trade deficit. A pressing need for innovation in spite of social and economic challenges revealed that past practices were insufficient in a global market.

Kanter's analysis presents a striking finding for the time: companies that are progressive in their human resource practices had a significantly higher long-term profitability and financial growth than other companies (1983:19). Such companies encouraged people at all levels to participate in suggesting new ideas and solving problems, and to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Companies with integrative structures and that had organisational cultures of collaboration, teamwork, pride, and commitment were most successful. On the contrary, territorial protection and fighting across groups of bureaucratic organisations produced an illusion of managers' unilateral power. The book has a persuasive tone and calls for a

‘renaissance’ of the corporation: to be innovative, companies would need to flatten hierarchies, decentralise power, and nurture achievements.

*Innovation and empowerment: troubling the mainstream*

*The Change Masters* has influenced innovation research in at least three ways. First, is in understanding *innovation as associated to change*. In Kanterian terms, innovation is the process of creating new ideas and problem-solving so that organisations can adapt. This idea is central to her work and is embedded in contemporary organisational analyses of innovation (Garud, Tuertscher, and Van de Ven, 2013). Second, *innovation is a networked phenomenon*: involvement of those at the grassroots level and a climate of innovation across the entire organisation are preconditions of change. Stakeholders and constituencies outside the organisation also stimulate change. Innovation, seen as a networked phenomenon, has since been widely investigated, for example Hargadon (2003) outlines how breakthrough innovations often derive from a broad network of resources. This shifts the view of change masters as lone initiators of change to beneficiaries of growing webs of infrastructures, institutions, people and objects (see also Garud, Tuertscher, and Van de Ven, 2013). Recent innovation research has recognised the role of technologies, objects, people, institutions, and regulations in shaping the innovation journey (Geels, 2004; Garud & Rappa, 1994). This has accompanied a perspective on *innovation as process* rather than outcome. Going beyond the variance approach, Garud, Berends and Tuertscher (2017) outline three modes of innovation as process; as a spectrum running from process as observed by the researcher, looking at patterns of change, to process as experienced by its participants (also, Garud 2008; Deken et al 2016).

Kanter’s work connects the human side of innovation and the structural conditions enabling it. In this sense, her work seems to lean towards ‘variance’ approaches to innovation, which identify causality between independent and dependent variables that determine change (e.g. Brown and Eisenhardt 1997). However, Kanter also brought *people* to the foreground at a time where attention to variance analyses of innovation dominated. Her writing, despite talking about culture as a variable for change, attends to human endeavour: *The Change Masters* alternates Kanter’s voice with those who have helped or hindered innovation in their organisations. ‘Empowerment’ is understood to be the ability to invest in people, to enable them to have control over their work and to find ways for contributing to the organisation. For Kanter, power is not diffused downwards from the top, but entails individuals seeking the means to explore and enfuse others’ propensity for change. Power is sustained by access to support (endorsement, backing, approval, and legitimacy), information (data, technical knowledge, expertise, political intelligence) and resources (funds, materials, time, and space) (Kanter 1982 and 1983). In integrative organisations, corporate entrepreneurs work in teams to produce small changes that lead, in turn, to wider impact. Empowerment, in *The Change Masters*, compels the reader to think beyond the limits of one’s role, to embrace democratic approaches and to experiment. It does so by proposing practical responses to conduct that stifle innovation: the neglect of ideas from the grassroots, bureaucratic procedures, lack of collaboration, a fear-based work environment, discouragement, tight control, secrecy in decision-making, lack of transparency, focus on cuts and savings, and assumptions of senior management superiority. Some circumstances might require unilateral and authoritative decisions rather than collaborative efforts, for example when quick

decisions are needed, but nevertheless, these 'dilemmas of participation' can be managed, especially when they concern the inner workings of teams, teams' relation with the wider organisation, and evaluation of the process by onlookers and members alike. Kanter's concept of empowerment has been taken up within the psychology literature as a condition that might affect employees' powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), and as a requisite for people to embrace responsibilities and express their creative energies (Spreitzer, 1995).

### *Change management*

In the final part of *The Change Masters*, Kanter explores five forces for change: First, Kanter introduces the idea of *departure from tradition*, which describes how organisations deviate from expectations, necessitating both flexibility and the deliberate creation of spaces for experimentation. The second force is a *galvanising event* that may occur outside the organisation and its operating frameworks. Third, change requires strategic decisions be made in conscious articulations of a direction, thus creating a *vision for the future*. Fourth, opportunities for change might drift away in the absence of an *individual prime mover*, that is, someone who takes the responsibility to activate change. Fifth and last, Kanter asserts that change would not be possible without the expression of *mechanisms* for new forms of action.

Kanter develops a systematic discussion of these forces in *Challenge of Organizational Change: How companies experience it and leaders guide it* (Kanter, Stein, and Jick, 1992). In doing so, she develops a Big Three model of change, based on *movement*, *form*, and *roles*. Kanter's understanding of change challenges Lewin's three-stage model linear and static approach. Yet, it seems that her own elaboration of change suffers from the widespread academic tendency to reduce change to its outcomes (e.g. Van de Ven 1987; Pettigrew, 1987). This, Chia (1999) argues, is traceable to its intellectual roots of Western civilization, ingrained in a metaphysics of substance that also led to the dominance of Newtonian physics. Kanter's use of typologies, hierarchies, systems and structures and other taxonomic classifications in the analysis of organizational change has also been criticised for its abstraction and for rendering fixed a continually transforming social reality (Chia 1999). Despite explaining change in terms of dominant static categories, Kanter's work has allowed academics and practitioners to understand the importance of structure and individual actions in shaping stability and instability.

The disruptive force of Kanter's work resides in questioning traditional ways of managing, and in suggesting a new perspective on innovation that places central value on the human (Kanter 2006). Her work implies that innovative companies that have integrative thinking can challenge established practices and be diverse and inclusive (Kanter 1983), that a corporate culture of relieving potential innovators from the bureaucratic structures that limit the expansion of their ideas will allow those ideas to flow down and up the pyramid (Kanter 2006). Thirty-five years after her groundbreaking book on change masters, flexibility and openness to new ideas, a non-silo mentality, and an emphasis on the human side of innovation remain key elements in the way management scholars think about innovation. Kanter continues to develop these ideas, suggesting more recently that companies should increase investment in employee empowerment and in emotional engagement with them to foster innovation (Kanter 2011).



For Kanter, successful organisations are social institutions; they stimulate internal collaboration and innovation through with a coherent identity that is based on common values, meaning, and purpose (2011); and empowerment of employees through a strong organisational culture led by values and principles (Kanter, in Bernhut 2009). Yet, the idea that employees' actions may be guided through their values and emotions has a normative implication that seems at odds with her transformative project. Kanter admits her notion of empowerment might challenge those on both sides of the aisle:

*"I know that this may sound utopian to conservatives and exploitative to radicals. But my response is the same to critics of both ends of the political spectrum. It appears that when it is in the interests of the people involved, and they are given genuine opportunity and power, they can be committed to finding the time to contribute to solving organizational problems" (Kanter, 1983:202)*

### **Where next for promoting innovation and equality? Progress and barriers to change**

*"I had a mission to explain people's experience in such a way that they could both understand why it was happening to them, see the barriers, and then break through them." (Kanter, in Puffer, 2004: 97)*

Having looked at some of Kanter's key contributions to the fields of organising difference and innovation, we bring them together to look at approaches that have been taken to changing organisations with respect to promoting gender equality and innovation. Both *Men and Women of the Corporation* and *Change Masters* opened the way for an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion through their analysis of gender dynamics, the mechanisms of information transfer, cognitive biases and struggles for power. Kanter's concepts help us to see how such dynamics result in access to opportunities, resources and status; and for organisations as a whole in their capacity to change, innovate and be mobile (Ibarra 2004). Bringing this chapter to a close, we take a look at the progress we have seen in the empowerment of those marginalised and of those attempting to innovate.

For marginalised groups, in Kanterian terms, we have seen changes with regards to an increase in the number of women in board-level positions and in some industries and in countries where there have been mandatory or voluntary quotas for appointments. However, policies that attempt to stamp out discrimination and promote diversity have been critiqued as ineffective (Ahmed 2007, Hoque and Noon 2004), and attempts to intervene as overly individualised (Brewis 2017, Özbilgin and Tatli 2011) or as reproducing gender stereotypes (Due Billing and Alvesson 2010). In the digital sphere, which promises reduced visibility of gender for entrepreneurs, inequalities are seemingly reproduced through intersectional dynamics of difference (Dy et al. 2017). Kanter's work has perhaps underestimated patriarchal relations with regards to the backlash from dominant groups that attempts at change have received. Zimmer (1988) argues that Kanter's work on proportional dynamics has been used to sideline the issue of sexism in the workplace and wider society. Thus, we need to consider what it is that marginalised people are being *included in*.

How we understand structure and its importance to reproducing inequalities has, as one would expect, moved forward since Kanter's writings. The use of typologies, hierarchies, systems and structures for understanding innovation and organisational change has moved from a reductionist approach toward the flux of social reality (Chia, 1999), emphasising heterogeneity, indeterminacy and surprise in organisational life. Innovation has been argued to be a process of human endeavour and experience (Garud, Berends, and Tuertscher, 2017). Much like Kanter's take on leadership, what is perhaps missing from her analysis is a perspective of innovation *as gendered*. The ideal innovator has traditionally been disembodied and gender-neutral, something disturbed by the presence of women in the innovation process (Pecis, 2016). *The Change Masters* thus lacks politicisation of the micro-dynamics of participants of organisational changes and innovation, and the gendered practices sustaining them.

## Conclusion

Despite the breadth of Kanter's influence in several areas of management and organisation studies, we have found that her work is often reduced to a handful of ideas. Revisiting Kanter, it is easy to see how this might have come to be – her works are dense with empirical examples and theorisation, and her writing an unusual combination of lush ethnographic accounts and pragmatic typologies. Childs and Krook (2008) argue that one key idea in Kanter's work – that group dynamics are a consequence rather than cause of proportional structuring – has suffered from reductionism itself in how it has been taken up in some research. The phenomenon of 'critical mass theory' illustrates how the nuance of Kanter's hypotheses – in this case, about the factors that might affect group dynamics as they change from skewed to tilted or balanced – have been lost in contemporary literature (e.g. Joecks et al. 2013, Stichman et al. 2010).

Despite reductionist tendencies, Kanter's research on women in corporations, and on change and innovation was groundbreaking. On gender, Kanter's shift from thinking of women's inequalities as a problem of women's career choices and behaviour to a problem of structure within groups, marked the assumption of gender differences as something actively reproduced and reinforced in organisational literature, and as oppressive. This emphasis on structural inequalities encouraged women to lobby for interventions to reduce proportional inequality, and for supporting policies. These were a spectrum from liberal to radical actions: from women's networks and acceleration programmes to quotas for women at particular levels of seniority or in particular industries. Yet, in the context of current discussions about organising difference, Kanter's work now seems to lack sufficient complexity in its capacity to address multiplicity: First, we need to account for multiplicity in difference: intersectionality theory asserts that socially-produced categories of difference such as gender, class, disability, race and so on are interconnected in the process of social exclusion (Crenshaw 1997). Scholars have begun to show how intersecting differences inform the dynamics of privilege and oppression (Bell and Nkomo 2001, Ruiz-Castro and Holvino 2016). Second, we need to account for increased multiplicity in our understanding of gender. Although not explicitly acknowledged, Kanter's descriptions of camaraderie displays among men and heightening of 'feminine' behaviours among women in response to role entrapment imply that gender is shaped by one's relations to others and also informs those relations. The

performative view of gender (Butler 1988, 1990, West and Zimmerman 1987) has transformed the ways in which we understand gender as a phenomenon (see discussions in relation to the workplace – Benschop 2017, Priola 2007, Tyler and Cohen 2010). We need to consider what Kanter's concepts might mean for Trans identities, non-binary genders and fluid gender. We suggest that her work might fruitfully be re-read with performativity, fluidity and/or greater multiplicity of gender in mind. Finally, the revolutionary aspiration in Kanter's work also echoes in the analysis of innovation and organisational change. Kanter highlighted the inevitable need to enact a culture for innovation that not only engages with the flattening of hierarchies, with organisational flexibility, and with the creation of opportunities for employees to conduct meaningful work, but also that is more inclusive. Thus, for Kanter, empowering people in the organisation is central to dismantling (gender) inequalities at work, and in the production of the successful and innovative organisations.

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